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Date: 2/17/98 6:01pm
Subject: privatization of Amateur Radio?

WT DKT #
98-143

Dear Sirs;

I would like to address the issue of Privatization of Amateur Radio, and my general opposition to it. While I understand that the FCC has been hamstrung by Congress with a lack of funds for enforcement and that such enforcement could therefore be greatly assisted privately, I question the validity of the most likely organization in this regard.

To wit, that the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) should NOT become the enforcer of 47 CFR Part 97 in my opinion.

I am a former ARRL member, and I do not intend to rejoin due to attitudes and agendas that appear to be ingrained in the organization. Indeed, by the ARRL's own reckoning less than 25 percent of the licensed Amateurs in the US are ARRL members. One must assume that there is a reason for this decline in the ARRL's ability to sell itself to any sizeable portion of the amateur community.

Over the years, the ARRL has maintained its belief (which appears to NOT be shared even by all its paid membership) that only Amateurs who hold "upper class" licenses which were acquired via the supposedly all-important 13 and 20 Word Per Minute (WPM) Morse Code exams were to be held in any sort of "consideration". Those who did NOT, the Novices and Technician Classes, have often been held in something like "contempt". No small wonder, then, that while the ARRL can't even muster 1/4 of the licensed Amateurs as members over 50 percent of the licensed Amateurs in this country are Novice, Technician or Technician Plus licensees.

Thus, it would seem that the ARRL is not in touch with the current state of Amateur Radio and in fact, would rather fight its way into the past rather than working toward the future. And by such a stance the alienation of many, many Amateurs is becoming more and more obvious, except perhaps to the ARRL.

As if being out of touch with both the present and the future of Amateur Radio isn't enough, the ARRL has proposed to violate the privacy of medical records of those persons who are among the "guilty until proven innocent" 8 percent that the ARRL (via its editorial mouthpiece, QST) has publically accused of fraud simply because they obtained a doctor's signature waiving them from the 13 and 20 WPM code exams. While the rest of American society is making accomodation for persons with legal disabilities, the ARRL is busy insulting them and essentially accusing them of being criminals.

While the ARRL is busying itself trying to stop the terrible flow of 8 percent of upgrading Amateurs having code waivers, it seems to be ignoring the 92 percent that DID take the code exams. I wonder if the ARRL has ever bothered to look at what percentages of Amateurs use primarily voice modes as opposed to morse code (that is, looked outside of their own paid members). I suspect that this percentage is higher than 8 percent, perhaps even by a factor of as much as 8 just as a guess.

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If the ARRL could say that the vast majority of Amateur upgrades who are not Morse Code enthusiasts had upgraded via a waiver, then they might have some legitimate grounds to stand on in claiming that there is an unacceptable level of fraud in the waiver process as it is currently administered. Instead, they would rather be given legal authority to intimidate and harass those people who do present an application signed by a doctor for the waiver.

In my opinion, this is NOT the sort of private organization that should be administering Amateur Radio. It seems all too apparent that the ARRL is likely to engage in a "witch hunt" if given the authority to do so, and in fact, they appear to have jumped the gun and already started. The gross insult to disabled Amateurs is evidence of it, again, in my opinion.

Therefore, I submit that if the FCC wishes to privatize Amateur radio it must be done through an organization that does not have these sorts of difficulties in dealing with the people that it claims to represent. I submit that it would be better in the long run if the FCC were to assist in the creation of a private organization with limited powers. This organization would be headed by a board consisting of leaders of the Amateur Community, selected by their own organizations. These individuals' leadership would be demonstrated by their ongoing involvement in any one of the many major Amateur Organizations, with only ONE representative from each organization. These individuals would be required to legally affirm in writing that their work and decisions would be based upon 47 CFR Part 97 and upon the law, and would NOT be unduly influenced by any single organization or commercial interest. The FCC would set the standards for these requirements, and would be empowered to remove any board member who failed to act according to those standards. Likewise, the board itself could vote to censure or remove a board member for inappropriate conduct, and ask that members nominating organization to send them a better candidate.

That is a suggestion for a framework. Obviously, it leaves a great number of details to be worked out.

As part of the Biennial Review process, I would further like to comment that if it is the goal of the FCC to "Streamline Amateur Radio", the following be strongly considered:

- 1) dispense with the 13 and 20 WPM Morse Code exams immediately. As with other FCC-regulated services, Amateur radio should recognize that any high speed telegraphy requirement no longer serves any useful purpose.
- 2) recognize that those persons who wish to use the Morse Code as part of the larger Amateur Radio hobby have every right to continue doing so - and write a legal protection into 47 CFR 97 that will clearly and unambiguously set aside "recognized" CW sub-bands for their use.
- 3) maintain the 5 WPM morse code exam in order to meet our international treaty commitments for licensing below 30 MHz.
- 4) recognize various sub-bands for special modes such as "weak-signals" and give them clear, unambiguous legal protection from

encroachment (thus eliminating any question of their priority to the sub-bands)

- 5) Eliminate the Technician-Plus license; give the operating priveleges of the Technician Plus to the Novice Class in addition to what the Novice Class already has.
- 6) Eliminate either the Advanced Class or the Extra Class, giving the maximum operating priveleges to whichever class continues.
- 7) Require a greater emphasis on law and operating procedure in the written exams.

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Thank you for the opportunity to offer input to the FCC. The favor of a reply regarding these issues is requested.

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